

In the matter of : Ross Ulbricht

Charges : Narcotics, Money Laundering, Conspiracy

VICTIM IMPACT STATEMENT

OF

Vicki [REDACTED] (mother)

Aimee [REDACTED] (sister)

I received a telephone call around 9.45am Saturday [REDACTED] February 2013, saying that Preston had a bad accident and had been transferred by ambulance to the local hospital. Aimee and their Dad picked me up to go to the hospital. All we knew was that Preston was very badly hurt.

When we arrived at the hospital, the emergency department staff asked us how we knew about it, as no one had been officially notified. It was only because Aimee and her Dad had by chance, driven past the scene and asked Preston's friends.

At the hospital, we were ushered into a private room with the doctor and then a social worker to talk to us. They prepared us for what was going to happen. Preston had suffered severe head injuries and they would have to operate immediately to reduce the swelling on his brain. I asked if I could see him before they prepared for surgery.

As it was a Saturday, I felt it took some time for the hospital to organize staff, etc. I was escorted in to see him. I noticed there was a lot of blood coming out from his right ear. There was staff surrounding Preston with apparatus to keep him breathing and continual observations. Preston was lifeless on the trolley.

Everyone was rushing around. I knew that blood out of his ear was not a good sign. I left the room. I asked if Aimee could come in and see him.

Due to the swelling, they had to operate to remove part of his skull. I went in with Aimee who said "hang in there Preston." I said "I love you son, hang in there, everything will be okay, they are going to look after you."

We went back to waiting in the family room. It seemed like a long time. During the wait the doctor came in and told us that Preston had lost all dilation in his pupils. They weren't going to go ahead with the surgery as it was too dangerous; they were going to administer a medication instead to help with the swelling of the brain. He was put onto life support at that stage. The doctors said they would see how Preston went over the next few days.

Shortly after, the doctor left, the social worker came back in and said "Sorry you have lost Preston." We were in total shock at her comments as we had not been told this by the Doctor.

From emergency he was transferred to the Intensive Care Unit, there were multiple meetings with specialists and the organ donation coordinator. I left the room and collapsed in shock, curled up in a ball on the floor, crying in disbelief of what was happening.

Media were at the hospital and also phoning us to get a story. It was a waiting game. Aimee continued to get phone calls so posted on Facebook, "Preston is not in a good way – hope he will come out of it."

Over Saturday, Saturday night – it was a very long time. Close family were coming in and knew the outcome wasn't going to be good, that Preston may not survive. On Saturday afternoon we understood from some of Preston's friends that what had happened to him was somehow connected with drugs.

Aimee and I had a room in the hospital that night. On Sunday morning, about 200 people came. We asked the hospital to let them in to say hello to Preston.

I took the first group of Preston's friends in and found myself saying, "This is what drugs are going to do to you." Nursing staff advised that I had better tone it down for the next group. That's not what I felt, I was angry that he had taken this drug, I just held onto hope that some miracle may happen and that my little boy was going to be ok.

Seeing all these kids coming in, some of them howling, it was so hard. Sunday was very busy – chauffeuring in all the friends and family to see Preston. We realised that day how much Preston had an influence on so many people.

We were aware of all sorts of rumors flying around. Rick [REDACTED] a local TV presenter and friend of the family telephoned us. We decided to do an interview with him. There were all sorts of out of control messages on Facebook. In the interview with Rick [REDACTED] we said we didn't know if drugs were involved.

On the Sunday night, Preston's blood pressure skyrocketed and his forehead became so swollen, we thought we were going to lose him. The hospital managed to control his blood pressure.

We were spending as much time as possible with Preston, just holding his hand, talking to him. I even gave him a sponge bath, given that it may be the last time I would get to be with my son.

On Monday, Preston had an MRI. More reporters were phoning constantly, we turned our phones off. The media started posting on Facebook, it was extremely exhausting and traumatic all at once.

A Doctor came in and sat in the interview room. He had a smile on his face. I thought it was going to be good news. It wasn't. He told us that Preston had died from a catastrophic brain injury – there was no blood flowing through his brain.

I asked "How do we know when to turn off the machine or to donate his organs?" The Doctor showed us an xray of a healthy skull and then Preston's skull. We could see that there was no blood flow.

The organ donor coordinator came straight in. We all agreed that was what Preston would have wanted. It seemed as if we were making a shopping list of what organs to donate. We decided that it would be his vital organs – heart, lungs, liver, kidneys and pancreas.

We said we wanted an opportunity for family and close friends to say goodbye to Preston. It was arranged that they could spend an half an hour with him on the Tuesday to say their last goodbyes.

Throughout Tuesday, people said goodbye. Wednesday was scheduled for operating. The three of us walked down to the theatre to say goodbye to Preston.

We kept the cast off his arm and some of his hair for keeps sake.

We then had to make funeral arrangements. A Service was held at Preston's school and over a thousand people attended. There were about nine hundred people at his funeral. Preston was very popular and well known.

He was an extrovert with a genuine heart. He once told me "mum I don't know anyone that I don't like, and who doesn't like me". At that time I just took what he said as being a show off. But it was telling the truth. He gave people guidance and wasn't judgmental. Preston was wise beyond his years, which I had relayed to me on numerous occasions.

He was always involved in sporting activities - football, little athletics, and baseball. We lived in the same area for many years along with living in the south west of WA for three years. Preston made many friends during his short life. His passing has affected a lot of people.

Vicki

The last two years have been extremely hard. I had an intense job as a Contracts Administrator. I went back to work after two weeks. After a year, my employer moved me into another role because I wasn't managing well. As a result, I had to learn a new job and have a \$15,000 pay cut which added to my already very high stress levels. Just before my pay cut, I had bought a new house with partner.

I went to counseling. I had lost a whole lot of confidence, I was being micro managed. However, I decided it wasn't going to beat me. Fortunately, last year I was given a good manager and I feel things are getting back on track at work slowly. My partner is very supportive and our relationship has stayed strong.

I think I was numb for the first twelve months after Preston's death. In ways, 2014 was the hardest year, the numbness had worn off, and I was crying all the time. When things get hard, I withdraw, push people away. These feelings can be overwhelming on anniversaries.

I am very concerned about Aimee's well being and health. She spends most of the time in her bedroom. I worry that she has bottled up her emotions. She and Preston had a very good relationship; she was his nurturing big sister. As Preston grew up, he was her protector. They hardly ever fought.

Often I look at old messages from Preston on my phone. Generally I try to keep busy and not over think what happened to Preston, and life without him. We keep Preston's ashes at home. Sometimes I just hold his ashes and get his blanket and try to get close to him.

At other times, I get really mad - Why did it happen? Why did Preston do it? He had so much to live for. One stupid synthetic tablet cost him his life.

I have started a Facebook page - "Stop Synthetic Drugs Killing Our Teens" I provide updates on what's going around at the moment, what's out and about and associated deaths and/or catastrophic reactions.

I also do volunteer work for Donor Mate, targeting 15-35 year olds to consider registering to donate their organs.

Aimee

On the Saturday morning my Dad and I were going for breakfast at the beach and we decided to contact Preston to see if he wanted to join us, but we didn't get a reply. We saw an ambulance and police car and what looked like a body under a sheet. As we drove on, we seemed to have the same thought – that it might be Preston as he attended his leavers' ball the night before and was staying with a friend for the night that only lived a few streets away. We decided to turn around and make some enquires. That's when my life changed forever. I was told by his friends that Preston had totally lost control, out of his mind; he was on the veranda of the hotel and jumped from the first floor because he was freaking out about going down the stairs.

I am not much of one for crying. People say that I am "so strong" but I'm not. I just cry myself to sleep. I have lost all motivation. I miss my brother so much.


I have had the same job for four years. My employers are very understanding. They had met Preston and attended his funeral. There has never been a problem with my having time off when I need it.

I was always really close to Preston, spent a lot of time with him. I didn't have an ongoing group of friends. Preston was the consistent person in my life.

Often I feel depressed and suicidal, wondering what is the point? I saw a doctor who prescribed anti- depressant medication. I only took for about six weeks. I just want to see Preston be with him. I can be going along okay and then this deep grief just hits me, like a bolt out of the blue. I try to avoid burdening people with my emotions.

I have a lot of trouble sleeping and then I am sleeping too much. At home I am constantly reminded of Preston's absence. We used to stay up late together, watch movies, get takeaway. Now, it is just me.

I have no doubt in my mind, that had Preston not taken that drug which one of his friends had purchased off the internet Silk Road, he would still be alive today.

Signed:  _____

Signed: _____

Dated: 8/  2015 _____

Dated: _____